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THE OBSERVATOR.

Remarks on the Tryals of the Captains that went out of the Line in the Engagement in the Straits. *The* Country-man *enclin'd to turn Sailor. A Proposal for Manning the Navy.*

From Saturday January the 13th, to Wednesday January the 17th, 1705.

Country-m. MAster *Observator*, here's an Account of the Tryal of the Captains, at a Court Martial, that went out of the Line at the Engagement in the *Straits*; they are all of 'em Acquitted: Pray your Opinion of it, you need not fear Speaking, you can't make your Circumstances much worse than they are.

Obs. There was a Necessity for the Tryal of those Captains, and that in two Respects, *First*, on Behalf of the Nation, which suffers by such Commanders as Desert, either thro' Cowardice or Treachery, in the time of Battel; against which Persons our Laws are very Severe. *Secondly*, on Behalf of the Commanders themselves, who are Criminals in the Eye of the Law until such time as they are Legally Acquitted.

The News by Authority told us, That these Gentlemen left the Line for want of Ammunition, and in that Case I am sure no Man of Conscience or Reason could find them Guilty: Would you have them Fight with their Hands behind them? Would you have them Guilty of such Intollerable Fool-Hardiness, as to Venture their Lives and the Nations Ships without the Necessaries of Defence? For my part I can find no Fault with any of 'em for going out of the Line, and I believe some of 'em, had they been provided for the Line, as were others, would have Behaved themselves as well.

If there was a Failure, it was in their being in the Line; for what had they to do there without Powder or Shot? If this was not known before the Engagement, it ought to have been known, and there was Cause of Suspicion from the Quantities of Ammunition had before been delivered at *Gibraltar*: When these Ships Tow'd out of the Line, without doubt the Enemy believ'd them to be Disabled, whereby they might be Animated to a more Vigorous Attack, when otherwise, had these Ships never come into the Line, but lain by, it might have had the contrary Effect, by Dispiriting the Enemy, believing them to be a Reserve of Force. But I have my Belly full of Sea Affairs, and shall say no more on this Subject.

Country-m. Master, I'll tell you what: If I go a Fighting it shall be to Sea; and, if I could, I would go in a Ship that I was sure would never come into the Line.

Obs. I find go or stay thou'l't be a Coward: Prithee how do'st thou Fight if thou art out of the Line?

Country-m. Look'ye, Master, I would Fight just as you go to Plow or Harvest; you love dearly to see other People Work, and so do I, to *See* other People Fight: I would fain go one Summer to Sea, and *See* a Fight, mark me, I don't say *Feel* it, and then come Home and tell the Country Fellows of it.

Obs. Thou hadst better be in it, 'twill be more for thy Honour, and thou'lt sooner be Credited.

Country-m. I believe all that: But Safe's the Word with *Roger*. Suppose I should be in a Fighting Ship, and a hard Iron Sea Dumpling should make Bold to Salute my Body, it would spoil telling my Tale: Or suppose one of 'em shou'd carry away the Pedestals of my Earthly Tabernacle, I should return Home like an Old Woman cut Shorter; our *Joan* would hardly take me again; a poor Dismember'd Wretch, a meer Hop-Frog; and suppose I should make good the Deficiencies of Nature by Art, and get a couple of Wooden Supporters, and Stump it about like the Devil upon two Sticks, how would the Country Fellows Laugh at me, there would be more Gaping and Staring at me on a *Sunday* at Church, than at the Lord of the Mannor.—— But, Master, I am real, if you can put me in a safe Place at Sea I will go and see a Fight.

Obs. I would advise thee to go on Board a Transport Ship or a Tender, for such Ships often lye by during the Engagement, and near enough to see the Fight plainly.

Country-m. This will do. ——

Obs. What dost Scratch thy Head for?

Country-m. Rope take it, 'tis all undone again, there's one Confounded thing I had forgot.

Obs. Something or other, I'll warrant it to spoil thee for a Sailor, what is it?

Country-m. Drowning, Drowning, Master, I may be Drownded let me go on Board any Ship, and then I shall go to the Bottom of the Sea, to a Country I don't know, where Coral grows instead of Beans and Peas; there I shall tumble over whole Mountains of *Oyster* and *Cockle Shells*; there the Sea Hogs, worse Creatures than your Friend *Robbin*, will pull out my Guts, while the Conger Eels run away with my Legs and Arms. Bless me! That ever I should think of seeing a Sea Fight, without considering this Dangerous Element, and how hard it is to Breath under Water. —— No, no, I find neither Land nor Sea Fighting will suit my Stomach.

Obs. There are too many like thee in *England*. I have often wondred how so few in *England*, a Country Surrounded by the Sea, have had a Genius to Naval Affairs. Talk with some Country Gentlemen about the Nature of our Defence by Sea, how Genuine and Natural a Support a Stout Navy is to their Lands of Inheritance, and you had as good talk to their Dogs, or their Horses; so Carless are Men of acquiring Knowledge in those very things that tend to the Preservation of themselves and the Realm.

Take a View of the *Plebian* Multitude of the Kingdom, and the very Notion of it makes 'em as Distracted as my *Country-man*. Says a Poor Silly Creature, that hardly knows how to keep Body and Soul together, being destitute of the

most ordinary Comforts of Humane Life, shall my Son go to Sea and be Drowned, or Crippl'd, or Kill'd, no he shan't, I'll work my Fingers to the Bones first to maintain him. Thus Poverty is Entail'd on a Family, meerly thro' the strange Chimera's of Imminent Danger, and a Youth, perhaps, kept from the Sea, that might advance his own and his Countries Fortune, and raise a Family to Grandeur, from the lowest Degree of Desparation.

As these Thoughts of Dangers at Sea are Cowardly, so are they Impious; 'tis calling in Question the Soveraignty of the Almighty, as if he was not the God of the Sea as well as of Land; and, as if he had not equal Power to preserve in all parts of the Universe: Now, *Country-man*, do but compare Dangers, thou art in as much Danger in the over-turning of a Cart, as thou art in the over-setting of a Ship; nay, more in Carting, than Sailing; I have seen many a Cart over-turn'd, and have seen a Brave Young Fellow kill'd by it; but I never saw a Ship over-set in so many Hundred Leagues as I have Sail'd on the Sea; and I know some that have us'd the Sea before I was Born, and in a manner were never off of it till this Time, that never saw such an Accident; thou art in danger in walking the Street, a Chimney may fall down and beat out thy Brains; there are Accidents in the Fields, in the Woods, in the Barn, in the House that may take away thy Life; thou art in as much danger in crossing of the *Thames* in a Sculler, as thou art in passing the Bay of *Biscay* in a Ship; there is no place free from Danger, nor is there any place free from Divine Protection.

England has formerly been Noted for its Wisdom in the Oeconomy and Strength of its Navy, and 'tis next a Wonder how our Stock of Sailors comes thus to be worn out. 'Tis in vain to Recriminate, and show the Reasons of it; past Errors are best amended by future Diligence and Application to Business; but sure it is, that the want of Seamen is much a greater Grievance than the want of Powder and Shot, for the want of the first makes the other useless.

Now it is Evident that tho' we want Sailors, we don't want Men to Man our Fleet; nor is it Absolutely necessary to have all Sailors on Board Ship, the Able Bodied Land-men will, in a few Years, become Able Seamen, and thus, by a continual Supply from the Land, we shall never want Men for Sea Service.

But this cannot be done without some New Law for that End, for we must not pretend to Press Land-men on the same Foot as we do Sailors, *Nemo perdit Patriam*, is as Sacred to *Englishmen* as the Laws of the *Medes* and *Persians*: However the Liberty of Natives, in this Respect, may be occasionally taken away, but only *Pro Rei-Publicæ Bono*, for the Good of the Common-Wealth, and that not *All* but *Some*, such as the Representative Wisdom of the Nation shall think most fit and proper for that Service.

Now suppose but one Man out of every Village in *England*, was order'd by a Law for this purpose, and proportionably out of every City and Town Corporate, the Port Towns only excepted, it would raise a sufficient Supply for the Navy, without any other Charge to the Government than bare Conduct Money; and these Men to be sent at the Election of the Parish, the Parish best knowing the Person fit, and that can best be spared for that purpose. This Method our Ancestors us'd in the Equipment of their Navy; every Sea-Port found so many Ships and Men, and such a proportion of Land was allotted for defraying the Charge of such a Port, and I don't find that the Navy of *England* had any other Provisions till *Henry* the Eighth.

And I am pretty Confident that such a Draught need not be made out of the Parishes more than once in an Age, if so often; 'tis our Misfortune that few of our Sailors come from the In-Land Countries, which have altogether wrong Notions of Sea Service; but by this means their Youth being sent to Sea, and to Foreign Countries, upon their Return would Animate others to the like Adventures, and so in Time our Navy would, for the most part, be supply'd with Voluntiers. *Country-man*, thou hast got four Lusty Young Fellows to thy Sons, why dost not send one of them to Sea?

Country-m. I wish I could get rid of *Tom*; he delights in nothing but Boxing, and Kicking, and Cuffing, Cudgel-Playing, and Wrestling; he's the Grievance of the whole Parish.

Obs. Let him go to Sea and Fight; canst be better rid of him?

Country-m. I did not care if I did send him, but if his Ship be Victualled from *Cuckolds-Point*, poor *Tom* will be Poyson'd, and then *Joan* will lay all the Blame on me.

Obs. I'll assure thee, by the Enquiry I have made of this last Summers Provision, it was sweet enough, tho' I find none that say the Pieces were too big.

Country-m. But I remember you told me t'other Day, that as they formerly made the Pickle too Weak, which occasion'd the Corruption of the Flesh, so now they do make it too Strong, which Eats out the Gravy and Moisture of the Meat, and renders it unfit for Nourishment.

Obs. That's an Error on the Right Hand; tho' it could be wish'd that Persons were Employ'd in that Affair that rightly understood the Business.

Country-m. But, Master, thy *Tom* is a Rugged Young Rogue, and he won't care to be Whip'd, and Pickl'd, and Drubb'd at the Jeers, to please the Fancy of the Commander; he's the Cock Boy of the Parish, and is very apt to Strike again.

Obs. There must be a Discipline in the Navy, you can't keep your own House in order without it; tho' I can't allow of Whipping Men, nor many other Barbarous Punishments used on Ship Board: But I must tell you that those Punishments have been mostly Inflicted by the Run away Captains; and Cruelty is the surest Sign of Cowardice that can be. But what can we say to these things? Madam *Necessity* is coming to Town, and then we may hope things will mend upon our Hands.

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